

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT

Foreign Policy Implications of
Stalin's Death and the Doctors'
Plot

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THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
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(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

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1. The new regime that was set up after Stalin's death has been formed by two strong men, G.M. Malenkov and L.P. Beriya, who have been bound by a long friendship and complicity. This regime has come into power by a real coup d'etat and has destroyed the Stalin structure of government and the Communist Party organization which had been selected at the 19th Party Congress, according to the dictatorial wishes of Stalin. It is doubtful that Malenkov's real position was as strong as was indicated by the fact that he had been proclaimed the heir to Stalin by the international press and even by Stalin himself. It is highly probable that Stalin, irritated by and suspicious of the clamor for an heir apparent, had selected Malenkov merely to quiet the clamor and to wait for further developments when other provisions could be made. In any case, if the composition of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party had been favorable to Malenkov and Beriya, there would have been no need to reduce it to approximately a third (36 in the original, now cut to 14) in such a drastic and sudden manner. It was probably done because Malenkov and Beriya felt that the Presidium could not be trusted. The same argument can be applied to the reduction of federal ministries by about 50 percent.
2. It has been rumored that, in his last few days, Stalin had been extremely nervous, almost as though he felt death to be near. He may have had an intuition that the noted doctors were incorrectly treating him deliberately on specific orders, and after their arrest, he forced them, with appropriate methods, to confess to being "Zionist agents and spies". He then capitalized on the event to accuse the United States of being connected with the plot and adopted the Tsarist trick of employing anti-Semitism to gain the sympathy of the people. It is certain that the seeking of Arab support was secondary.
3. In the light of recent events, however, the possibility cannot be excluded that Stalin may have designed the doctors' arrests as a step against Malenkov and

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Beriya. In fact, in January, the dictator replaced V.K. Abakumov with N.G. Ignatyev as Minister of State Security.¹ Abakumov was a Beriya man, while Ignatyev must have enjoyed the personal confidence of Stalin. As soon as Malenkov and Beriya took power, Ignatyev was removed from his post to become a Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. His appointment was confirmed on 14 March 1953, on the eve of the meeting of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. This "promotion" may have been designed to allay the suspicions of Ignatyev's police friends and adherents and to eliminate any possible trouble from them. The public announcement of his new position came on 21 March, and, as is already known, he has now been released.²

4. Another possibility is that the release of the doctors and their whole case can be used as an excuse for a purge of the security forces by Beriya, so that the police can be rendered an absolutely secure instrument. Logically, such a purge would precede any other, since it will be the police who will be used to purge the Party and the administration. Such are the traditions of the country and the legacy of the dead Stalin.³ For centuries, Russia has been governed by force, and the revolutions that have occurred here, as elsewhere, have always been against weak sovereigns or leaders, never against real autocrats.
5. The real power today is the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and not the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Party.
6. In connection with foreign policy:
 - a. The "friendly" air in Moscow is most apparent in little gestures.
 - b. A lessening of the obdurate attitude on Korea is logical, since the new regime fears that Stalin's death may induce Washington to carry out the plans of the new Republican administration. No other "Koreas" are likely while the consolidation of the new government is taking place, and this will probably take some time. Moreover, the Soviet people want peace.
 - c. The German question is the most complex. Indications are that the Soviets consider two alternatives: a united but neutral Germany, or two Germanys which will counterbalance each other. The latter solution is preferable to them. Nor can it be excluded completely that the Soviets will insist that either solution be guaranteed by a Locarno-type pact among the four big powers.
 - d. The Austrian question seems to be a corollary of the German question, and it is doubtful that it can be resolved by itself.

25X1A 1. [] Comment. The time of Abakumov's replacement by Ignatyev is not known. Abakumov had not been seen since the beginning of 1952, and the first indication that Ignatyev had been appointed in his place came in January 1953, when Ignatyev was nominated by the workers of the MGB to the Moscow City Council.

25X1A 2. [] Comment. Ignatyev's release was announced on 7 April 1953.

25X1A 3. [] Comment. In the Soviet Union's major purges during the 1930's, the purging of the security forces followed that of the Party and the administration.

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